

**Platform Meeting on Community based Tank Management Systems  
April 7<sup>th</sup> 2006, IC-Delegation Office, Hyderabad**

**Background**

Tank irrigation systems of India are centuries old. Unfortunately, performance of most of these systems has been on a decline due to improper management and policies. Some of the major problems afflicting these systems are increased siltation, poor maintenance of bunds and other structures, mismanagement of catchment area and command areas, encroachments etc. Policy interventions envisaged include physical investments, management and legal aspects.

The Government of Karnataka (GoK) has initiated a process of reforms in tank management with World Bank support that aims to improve rural livelihoods and reduce poverty by developing and strengthening community-based approaches to improving and managing selected tank systems. Towards this end, the GoK took a decision to transfer management of all tanks to communities and a society called Jala Samvardhane Yojana Sangha (JSYS) was created to facilitate this process. The project has been implemented in 34 taluks of 9 districts covering about 2005 tanks at a cost of US \$92.61 million. A similar project is now being proposed in Andhra Pradesh.

**A platform Meeting**

After a recent field visit by the members of the Capitalization of Experiences (CE) process, supported by SDC/Intercooperation, it was proposed to have a platform meeting in order to learn from the experiences of NGOs who were involved in the Karnataka Community Based Tank Management project. As a next step to this process of learning and sharing, the CE subgroup (concerned with rules, regulations and management systems in water management) organized a small meeting at Hyderabad, facilitated by Intercooperation, to bring together individuals and organizations involved and interested in tank management.

**Objectives**

The objectives of the meeting are:

1. To share NGO experiences from the World-Bank aided Karnataka Community Based Tank Management project.
2. To understand issues and challenges
3. To share experiences of NGO tank management programs in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.
4. Identification of action points for better implementation of integrated tank management.

## Experiences of Community based tank management project in Karnataka

Dr.M.V.N. Rao of Grama Vikas, who has been involved in the tank management project in Karnataka shared his experiences of being an NGO partner, implementing the project. He elaborated on the gaps that existed between the guidelines for implementation and during the actual implementation of the project. Some of the differences are summarized below:

According to guidelines	Experience of Gram vikas
All direct and indirect tank users in the village are allowed a stake in the tank. Communities to form Tank Management Institutions (TMI) that will plan, budget and implement the work.	Decisions are taken by officials who issue orders without consulting communities The project directorate has introduced a system of agency (for procurement) that prevents decision-making by communities.
NGOs to facilitate the programme	Although NGOs are to facilitate the programme, they are treated as contractors to complete the job.
JSYS requires debate, discussion and democratic interaction between the directorate and NGOs.	Difficult in a scenario where the Directorate rules by circulars and orders.
Special Provision for women in the form of Women Interest Groups.	Women are invisible.
75% of the budget of the bigger tanks earmarked for desilting. Half of desilting of small tanks should be manual.	Poor environment consciousness – silt ignored as nutrient, dead storage creation ignored, diesel-burning machines encouraged. Daily wage earners denied employment.
Convergence and coordination among the departments envisaged.	Lack of coordination between departments and programs such as watershed development. Minor irrigation department of the state government kept out of the tank management project.
Rehabilitation for families affected by eviction of encroachment on tank bed.	Not addressed properly and affected households especially the dalits still affected by such displacements. Finally, cumulative effect of all the above affects the dalits, the most vulnerable section of the society.

## Issues for focus

A number of issues came up for discussion based on the experiences of the members and organizations involved in tank management programs. The major issues that came up for discussion were categorized under the headings: Roles, Integration, Process issues and desiltation.

## Issues for focus:

<b>Roles</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Allocation for training CFTs</li><li>➤ Output based payment to CFT</li><li>➤ Clarity on the role of NGO- intermediary or community facilitator?</li><li>➤ Problems of scaling up activities by NGOs</li><li>➤ Problems due to target oriented approaches</li><li>➤ Identification of suitable NGOs for facilitating the project (rather than involving NGOs with no experience in tank management)</li><li>➤ Respecting the MoU between the Government department and the NGO</li></ul>
<b>Integration</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Need to understand vested interests</li><li>➤ Accountability</li><li>➤ No link with watershed development program</li><li>➤ Better collaboration and understanding between government departments and NGOs</li><li>➤ Lack of integration with other programs in Karnataka</li><li>➤ No clarity on the role of Panchayats</li><li>➤ Registered versus actual command and tail issues</li><li>➤ Water literacy</li></ul>
<b>Process issues</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Stakes of poor – How to ensure them?</li><li>➤ Local stakes important from the point of sustainability</li><li>➤ Community contribution at fast forward pace</li><li>➤ Project too far removed from the community</li><li>➤ Relocation and rehabilitation of people evicted from tank bed</li><li>➤ Participation of women in project</li><li>➤ Integration of other tank related livelihoods such as fisheries into the program (maintenance of dead storage)</li><li>➤ In general, it was observed that small landowners were located in the catchment areas and large farmers owned land in the command areas</li><li>➤ Feasibility of land use options (such as System of Rice Intensification (SRI) type of cultivation)</li><li>➤ Dalits had no benefits from the project (issue of equity and sustainability)</li></ul>
<b>Desiltation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Importance of silt: Provides numerous local benefits</li><li>➤ Use of machinery for desiltation activities: Machinery mostly used for quick coverage but results in problems low wages to manual labor (since</li></ul>

- wages are paid on par with cost of mechanized de-silting)
- Amount of labor needed for desilting (1200 laborers x 60 days per hectare)
- Low interest among the community in tank management due to low priority given to desiltation
- Demand for silt – selective
- Link silt application with catchment area treatment
- Problem of silt disposal to be addressed
- Transportation of silt is an issue that needs consideration especially from the point of equity
- Issues that need attention while estimating the amount of desiltation include the depth for desiltation, project period
- Limitation in application of silt has to be acknowledged (based on demand, labor, transportation costs etc.)
- Combination of machinery and manual labor for desiltation can be considered (decision can be made by the community)
- Subsidy for silt application can be considered. But corruption is closely associated with subsidies and safeguards to control corruption is a necessity

### **Action points identified**

#### **In project formulation**

- Involvement in policy advocacy
- A forum of NGOs with tank management experience mooted (It was also felt that such forum should be independent to avoid the risk of cooptation)
- Forum should act as a safe guard and also set standards, checks and balances for NGOs
- Role in monitoring in the anticipated pilot areas (Ananthapur and Mahabubnagar districts) of the World bank supported tank management project in Andhra Pradesh
- A careful observation of the tendering procedures and processes to keep vested interests at bay.
- Better understanding of the government procedures and dialogue based on factual information
- Development of mechanisms for facilitating better inputs from NGOs based on their experiences in large programs
- Have interface meetings with Minor Irrigation department
- Constitute a working group comprising of NGO and GO to address problematic issues that crop up
- Give priority to Water User Groups (WUG) and rights of landless
- Look into integration or linkages between panchayats and the WUGs

<b>Implementation</b>
Mobilize Tank User Groups (TUGs) before the project is grounded Contribute to the project design from the TUG perspective
<b>Immediate action</b>
To check the status of the world bank project Harvest innovative ideas from NGOs